

Some of them may be more sympathetic than some of the others; but I will tell you, we happen to believe that the editorial pages of the New York Times and Washington Post have a leftward tilt, and I think the success of talk radio on the conservative side is in large part a response, a response, to a level of frustration that many Americans have felt over the message that has come from the New York Times and the Washington Post editorial pages.

So I happen to believe that we have some wonderful, wonderful things taking place in this country; and we need to do more to encourage creativity. And the idea of having the government clamp down, jeopardizing the opportunity to pursue new technologies, which it will take investment to do, would just plain be wrong.

I have to go upstairs, but I thank my friend for yielding; and I very much appreciate the opportunity to engage in this discussion and look forward to again another free-flowing debate with hundreds of thousands of people following us as we talk about whether or not we should have a national healthcare system.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Reclaiming my time, I think both gentlemen would, in fact, have to agree that in our country and in a democracy like ours, we live often by the golden rule; but we also have to acknowledge that whoever has got the most gold, most often makes the rules. And I am afraid that too much of the gold is becoming concentrated in too few places, which really means that corporate ownership is becoming too powerful; and when it does, then it makes for a skewed democracy or a more one-sided decision-making process, and it needs to be balanced off a little bit, which really means that more people need to become part of the ownership of America, rather than too few people owning too much.

If that is the thesis that the gentleman from Vermont is promoting, then I would agree with him, and yield for further amplification.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I think my friend said it very, very well. This is a great Nation, and we have enormous things to be proud of. But I remain very, very concerned that fewer and fewer people own more and more of our economy, own more and more of our media, while, at the same time, the average person that the gentleman and I represent are working, in many cases, longer hours for lower wages just to keep their heads above water.

But the point of my remarks tonight was not just to talk about the economy and ownership in the economy, but was to talk about the media; and my deep concern is that the American people are not hearing all points of view; that corporate ownership of the media is preventing a large segment of ideas which represent the thinking of many, many Americans from getting out there, and I think that is not good for our democracy.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. I thank the gentleman, and, reclaiming my time, I would have to agree. I would even go beyond just the media. I mean, one of the reasons, for example, that I am so much in favor of employees reaching the point where they exercise more ownership of where they are and where they work is because the more you spread the ownership, the more you open up the process; and the more open the process, the greater the potential for this commodity that we call democracy. I think that is what we are constantly striving for, a more democratic Nation, where more people are engaged and are part of the decision-making.

I want to thank the gentleman for coming down.

Mr. SANDERS. I thank my friend for allowing me to participate.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENT TO H.R. 3090, ECONOMIC SECURITY AND RECOVERY ACT OF 2001

Mr. DRIER (during special order of Mr. DAVIS of Illinois), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107-367) on the resolution (H. Res. 360) providing for consideration of the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 3090) to provide tax incentives for economic recovery, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PRICE SUPPORT PAYMENT LIMITATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PENCE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, the agricultural industry in the United States over the last 100 years has contributed a great deal. As we develop this year's farm bill, we are now trying to decide, number one, how much should we pay in terms of tax subsidies to farmers, tax dollars going into subsidies to farmers, to make sure that the agricultural industry in the United States survives.

Farmers are facing record low prices compared to the last 20 years. In fact, in terms of what a bushel of wheat would buy, the wheat price today is much lower than it was 50 years ago.

What kind of policy do we want in the United States? We are now in a subsidy war, if you will, with other countries. Other countries have decided they are going to do anything necessary to keep their farmers operating, so they are subsidizing their farmers in these other countries substantially. Their extra production from Europe, from these other countries, go into what would otherwise be our markets, so the resulting overproduction from all over the world results in low commodity prices, and the low commodity prices today would not keep most farmers in business.

Subsidies in the United States represent about 17 percent of the gross income of the average farm. The average net income of an average farm is around 6 percent. So, again, without the subsidy payments, most farms in the United States would lose money every year.

Now, the irony is that farmers do not like to have this subsidy check coming from the government. They would much rather have a real marketplace, where there was real competition throughout the world, where they could compete and make good money farming. And make no mistake, our farmers in the United States can compete, if you will, excuse the expression, on a level playing field, with any other agricultural producers in the world in most commodities.

Our challenge right now is the Senate has passed one farm bill, and the House has passed another farm bill, substantially different in the concepts of where they want agriculture to go and what they want in the farm bill. That includes rural development, that includes the environment in rural areas, that includes the WIC program for food for infants and pregnant mothers, that includes the Food Stamp program.

Just as a footnote here, let me say how we have changed the U.S. Department of Agriculture over the last 50 years. USDA, that part of USDA that is involved in production agriculture, with farmers, now represents only about 25 percent of the total budget of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I am here tonight to talk about payment limitations to some of the huge mega-farmers in the United States. The Senate in their bill had provisions that incorporated a level of payment limitations in the hope that some of the large mega-farms would have some kind of a cap, some kind of limit on the payments they received, so there would be more money for what I would call the average mainstream farmer in the United States and some of the other programs in the agricultural bill.

We passed an agriculture bill back in 1996 that pretty much everybody supported. All of the farm organizations thought it was a good idea. What that was is the Freedom to Farm, and it was a phase-out of government subsidy programs. So over 7 years, the subsidy payments to farmers went down and down, and then in the eighth year farmers were supposed to produce strictly for the market.

What happened is the economy in Asia was tremendously disrupted and their purchases went down, and we had a glut of extra farm production; so prices went down, and even with the one subsidy phase-out payment, farmers were going broke, going out of business, going bankrupt.

Now we are developing this new farm legislation, and the question before us is should we have payment limitations on how much money any one farm operation can receive in payments from the Federal Government.